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THE TREATY OF GHENT AND THE HUNDRED YEARS OF PEACE*

By BISHOP EDWIN H. HUGHES

THE signing of the Treaty of Ghent was followed by several remarkable movements toward peace. This was not simply because the people were wearied by the wars of the period, but also because thoughtful men studied the beginnings of the War of 1812, and read the treaty that ended that war, and came to the conclusion that the struggle had been needless. When men have expended blood and treasure in a lavish way, and then later awake to the realization that all the mournful sacrifice could have been avoided, it is slight wonder that they at once look for better and more reasonable methods of settling international difficulties. Presuming that the War of 1812 was somewhat typical of our international struggles, we are allowed to draw four very plain lessons and add them to the text-books of the peace movement:

1. The first is that of the needlessness of war, if prejudice be absent and steadiness and strength be in control. On our side the program for war was handled largely by impetuous young men. Henry Clay was Speaker of the House. He was but thirty-five years of age. John C. Calhoun was chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. He was but thirty years old. These men and their compatriots rather prided themselves on the fact that they had not been born as colonial Americans, but rather had come as native citizens of the New Republic. Henry Clay bore the suggestive nickname of "War Hawk," and was fond of the bellicose statement that a few Kentuckians would have no difficulty in defeating England. Old men are sometimes needed for the counsels that prevent war. In this case the impetuosity of youth played its big part in bringing on a needless struggle.

In addition to this, prejudice was a companion cause. So far as we can now judge, we had as much reason for war with France as we had for war with England. But our old hatred, growing out of the colonial differences and from the conflict of 1775, led us to choose Great Britain as our antagonist. Accounts very generally agree that the war never should have occurred. The vote in the House stood 79 to 49. The vote in the Senate stood 19 to 13. These were narrow margins upon which to proceed into a bloody struggle. The mood of the Hartford Convention shows that the war lacked popular support—largely because the people felt that they had been rushed into the unnecessary shedding of blood. What marvel, then, that the War of 1812 was followed by a vigorous peace movement when men of level minds were compelled to believe that, if prejudice had been put aside and maturity had been on hand, all the struggle would have been avoided!

2. The second lesson was that all the real problems of the war had finally to be transferred to tribunals that

could better have been used before there was any war! The Treaty of Ghent did not even mention the big issues for which the conflict was waged. It contained no word about the impressment of seamen, or the Newfoundland fisheries, or naval forces on the Northern Lakes, or the rights of neutrals. These had all been settled by the logic of events, or else were turned over for settlement to the tribunals of peace. Probably the most significant thing in the treaty was its reference to the slave trade as "irreconcilable with the principles of justice and humanity." Yet the slavery issue was not really involved in the main contest. It was hardly possible that the level minds of the period should not have concluded that, if the question had to be referred to peaceful negotiation after all, it was better that every such matter be referred to reasonable courts prior to the shedding of blood.

3. The third lesson relates to the influence of democracy, both as bringer of peace and as a preventer of war. We give now no hard-and-fast definition of democracy. It is often claimed by our friends who live under a limited monarchy that they have as much democracy as do the people of the United States. Democracy here refers simply to some proper expression of public opinion ere the people who must bear the burdens and shed the blood are exploited by the captains of militarism. Mrs. Browning intimates this in her passage in "Aurora Leigh":

"This Cæsar represents, not reigns,
And is no despot, though twice absolute;
This head has all the people for a heart;
The purple's lined with the democracy."

It is certainly not too much to ask that the people be heard from ere the people be sacrificed!

But the truth is that war thrives by means of autocracy. Who believes that Europe would be so terribly embroiled today if there had been a chance for the sober and deliberate expression of public opinion? One might say that the war began with the assassination of a member of a royal family; that four monarchies entered the maelstrom ere one republic came; that England, with her larger democratic expression, came late into the fray; that Italy came still later because she waited for the sure voice of her people, and that the Swiss Republic still remains at peace amid her mountains. Modify and discount all the statements as we may, they are at least suggestive. It may be that the cure of war is more democracy. It may even be that the best available peace movement would be an agreement among the great nations that no war would be prosecuted without an expression of popular opinion at the polls—with a provision for mediation in case one or both voted for the struggle! If all this seems chimerical, it is none the less the logical extension of democracy. Surely it is more reasonable than it is to claim that the lives of millions should be at the mercy of a small inner council, and that the only attitude of the people should be "not to reason why," but merely "to do and die."

* The author's outline of his address delivered by the Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the International Peace Congress, San Francisco, California, October 13, 1915.

Beyond this, it would seem that an army in its very organization must be the veriest denial of democracy. The absolute monarch of our day is not a king; he is an officer! This spirit works even into the social life of military organization. If an officer of rank shall marry the daughter of a corporal or sergeant, let him prepare himself for ostracism. If Gunner Morgan is proposed for advancement, let an admiral object on the ground that the commission would offend social standards! All this makes it appear that there is a contradiction between militarism and democracy. If pure democracy gets a chance at war, war will have its biggest battle in keeping its place on the earth. When the commissioners to negotiate terms of peace sent word that peace seemed out of the question, the pressure of popular opinion, both in England and in the United States, made itself felt. The hands of the millions wrote the Treaty of Ghent. It was a very democratic document, and one of its lessons was that democracy would usually be the foe of war.

4. The fourth lesson of the Treaty and the Century of Peace relates to the power of fundamental friendship to stand the strain of serious issues. It would appear that we have had more opportunities for war with Great Britain than we have had with any other people. Yet our friendship has been equal to many crises. Not less than seven serious questions have tested these hundred years. First there came the controversy with reference to the northeastern boundary, settled by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Second came the northwestern boundary question, expressed in the fervent cry, "Fifty-

Four-Forty or Fight!" Well, we made it Fifty-Nine, and we did not Fight at all! Third came the Trent affair, laden with portentous possibilities. Fourth came the Alabama Claims, settled by a court of peace. Fifth came the Mixed Commission that grew out of the Alabama agitation. This commission settled the demands of 478 British subjects and of 19 American subjects. Who today hears talk of any national humiliation involved in the closing of only three short of five hundred questions? Sixth came the Venezuela controversy, handled at last with rare consideration on both sides of the sea. Seventh was the Behring Sea dispute, and out of it came the conviction that two peoples, fundamentally friendly, could not be driven to bloody strife with reference to kettles of fish. Surely these seven matters, and other minor and yet acute issues, have proven the power of international friendship to endure the heaviest strains.

Good men and women who contemplate the four facts now recounted can scarcely avoid the right answer to the question, If it has been thus between Great Britain and the United States for more than a century, why may not this gracious interrelation be given its world-wide application? Why may we not bring in the fulfillment of the prophecy in Dr. Sears' hymn:

"When peace shall over all the world
Its ancient splendors fling.
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing."

A LETTER FROM THE TRENCHES

We regret that we are unable to give the name of the author of this authentic letter. He is a major in the English army.—EDITOR.

WE ARE NOW at the edge of the world, so to speak, right up against that big town that Mister Hun would give his eyes to get. We are living the life of moles or rabbits. Halsall and I share a dugout about 14 x 6 x 4' 6", rather back-breaking, and the beams are very hard when in contact with one's head. We have, as usual, a lot of work to do. In addition to having to work at night in the trenches, we have a pontoon bridge to maintain and certain roads to keep clear for traffic. You may remember that I came up to this city on a joy ride some seven or eight weeks ago. Well, that was before the second bombardment. The city then was full of shops, open and doing a fair trade with the troops and a good many civilians who still remained in the neighborhood; now the place is one vast charnel-house; hardly a sound house throughout the length and breadth of it. The stench is awful, for there must be hundreds of dead never collected, and the houses are not safe to enter. In the center of the city is the Grand Place; on the left, as you enter the square, is the ruin of what was once one of the finest public halls in the world, and it so stood for five hundred years or more. Now it is a thing of pathos; not a whole window or wall; hardly any of the once magnificent tower standing; the skeleton of the clock still looks over the Grand Place, with fingers showing five and twenty minutes to five. All is

charred; fires are burning still, and have been for the last five weeks. In the right-hand corner lie the remains of what was once a cart and pair horse team. Everything burnt, as it was impossible to remove them. In the center of the square is the remains of a forage cart, one wheel gone, the contents lying beside it, and an ominous hole where the shafts and horse had been. Both sides of the square are heaps of rubble and twisted iron girders, remnants of what were once busy shops and offices. Going on is the narrow thoroughfare leading to one of the gates through the ramparts and causeway across the moat. On the left-hand side of this narrow street is a heap of evil-smelling ashes, the carcass of a horse, burnt for health's sake, and the twisted barrel of a rifle; heaven only knows what has happened to the owner. Across the causeway is a broad road once lined by what were once happy homes. On the right is a mass of ruins and a hole 60' in diameter and 30/40' deep made by one shell. On the left has stood a handsome wall, enclosing what was once God's acre, which now shows the handiwork of the devil. Beautiful crosses and monuments overthrown and broken to fragments. I have not explored it, as once again one meets the smell of death and decay from bodies exhumed by high explosives. Twenty or thirty yards on we turn to the right on our way to our sector of the line. Again on our left is a beautiful cemetery. The mark of the beast is not so evident here to the eye, but one's other senses tell you what has occurred on the other side of